

YOU GOTTA BE ON THE MOUND TO THROW A FASTBALL

One question I get asked more than any other, professionally and not relating to my follicular challenge or my vertical extent is: Who or what is AIRAH?

I have a friend in the US who goes by the name of Stanley. Stanley is a wood carver extraordinaire. He carves giant sharks that hang from barroom ceilings, psychedelic chickens that stand on one leg, wooden nipples and noses you affix to your baseball cap and just about anything else his quirky imagination allows.

I often chewed the fat with Stanley down at his studio, or "The Tank" as it was universally known. Some nights he'd be out playing hoop or skinning some road kill he'd found on the turnpike for its hide, but mostly he'd be down at "The Tank", chainsaw in hand, cheroot clamped between his teeth with his nipple-bedecked Red Sox baseball cap pushed back on his head.

I am not very artistically inclined, and Stanley fascinated me. When you watched him at work buzzing chunks off a lump of wood with his chainsaw, you invariably had no idea where he was heading with the piece at hand; I often suspected he didn't either.

I enjoyed watching people wander over at this stage of the process, eye off the rough-hewn lump and ask

what it was. His response never varied: "It's art buddy. It is whatever you want it to be!"

Our organisation is bit like Stanley's art: it is many things to many people, but rarely the same thing to two people. AIRAH is whatever you want it to be.

There's an old member I met in Brisbane at Refrigeration 2012. He is from north Queensland. He drove the nine hours down in his immaculate old Fairlane; his son flew. He's been a member since Adam was a lad; he believes AIRAH has kept his skills and knowledge current over the years. Now his son, half his old man's 80 or so summers, sees the same benefit in his membership that kicked off when he was a teen apprentice to his dad.

There's a somewhat crazy member up in Darwin – wouldn't you be if you had to endure that heat all year round? He told me he drifted into town and started his own business years ago and AIRAH provided him with the technical support network he so desperately needed at the time.

I know a young woman who has a consulting office that's only about a throw from the boundary rope from where I sit. She more than holds her own intellectually and professionally and is a much-

respected engineer. She told me she joined AIRAH because our industry has scant representation from the fairer sex and she loves the technical meetings where ideas are bounced around and jostled among like-minded, passionate, fellow engineers.

We have members in the plantroom, we have members in the boardroom. We have members at the Australia Club, we have members at the Parramatta Leagues Club. We have members who design systems, we have members who build systems. We have members who are starting out, we have members who are finishing up.

AIRAH has neither one personality, nor one stereotype nor one dimension.

AIRAH is what you want to make of it and if you work in the HVAC&R industry in Australia you should be part of it.

As my buddy Stanley would say, "You gotta be on the mound to throw the fastball!"

Join today. ▲

Neil Cox
Managing editor